THE YUKON TRAIL

Copyright, William Macleod Raine

Story

An Alaskan Love

William Macleod Raine

HOLT RECOGNIZES ELLIOT, AND THE TWO OVERPOWER-ING THE KIDNAPERS, RETURN TO KAMATLAH, WHERE ELLIOT LEARNS TRUTH ABOUT COAL LAND DEALS

Synopsis,-As a representative of the government Gordon Elliot is on his way to Alaska to investigate coal claims. On the boat he meets and becomes interested in a fellow passenger whom he learns is Sheba O'Nelll, also "going in." Colby Macdonald, active head of the landgrabbing syndicate under investigation, comes aboard. Macdonald is attacked by mine laborers whom he has discharged, and the active intervention of Elliot probably saves his life. Elliot and Macdonald become in a measure friendly, though the latter does not know that Elliot is on a mission which threatens to spoil plans of Macdonald to acquire millions of dollars through the unlawful exploitation of immensely valuable coal fields. Elliot also "gets a line" on the position occupied by Wally Selfridge, Macdonald's right-hand man, who is returning from a visit to "the States," where he had gone in an effort to convince the authorities that there was nothing wrong in Macdonald's methods. Landing at Kusiak, Elliot finds that old friends of his, Mr. and Mrs. Paget, are the people whom Sheba has come to visit. Mrs. Paget is Sheba's cousin. At dinner Elliot reveals to Macdonald the object of his coming to Alaska. The two men, naturally antagonistic, now also become rivals for the hand of Sheba. Macdonald, foreseeing failure of his financial plans if Elliot learns the facts, sends Selfridge to Kamatlah to arrange matters so that Elliot will be deceived as to the true situation. Elllot also leaves for Kamatlah and, wandering from the trail, believes that he faces death. Selfridge, on his arrival at Kamatlah, has his agents abduct Gideon Holt, old-time miner, who knows too much about Macdonald's activities.

CHAPTER VIII-Continued. _5-

A man staggered drunkenly into then lurched toward the waiting group.

The other man nodded. Neither of stranger, who stopped in front of their camp and looked with glazed eyes from one to another. His face was drawn and haggard and lined. Extreme exhaustion showed in every movement. He babbled incoherently.

"Don't you see he's starving and out of his head?" snapped Holt brusquely. "Get him grub, pronto."

The old man rose and moved toward the suffering man. "Come, pard. Tha's all right. Sit down right here and go to it, as the old sayin' is." He led the man to a place beside Big Bill joined. The word of old Holt alone and made him sit down. "Better light a fire, boys, and get some coffee on. that of a disinterested party it would Don't give him too much solid grub

given him and clamored for more.

"Now tell us told him soothingly. how come you to get lost." The man nodded gravely. "Hit that line low, Gord. Hit 'er low, Only

three yards to gain."
"Plumb bughouse," commented Dud,

chewing tobacco stolidly. "Out of his head-that's all. He'll

be right enough after he's fed up and



A Man Staggered Drunkenly Into View.

had a good sleep. But right now he's sure some Exhibit A. Look at the bones sticking through his cheeks," Big Bill commented.

"Come, Old-Timer. Get down in your collar to it. Once more now, Don't lie down on the job. All together, now." The stranger clucked to an imaginary horse and made a motion of lifting with his hands.

"Looks like his hawss is bogged down in Fifty Mile swamp," suggested Holt.

"Looks like," agreed Dud.

eyes narrowed to shining slits. If this fro. If Blg Bill had held any doubts man had come through Fifty Mile swamp, he must have started from the river. That probably meant that he Dud with the breakfast, Holt. I'll look had come from Kusiak. He was a out for our friend." young man, talking the jargon of a college football player. Without doubt chance to talk together that morning. ridge.

he was, in the old phrasing of the

North, a chechako. Gideon Holt's sly brain moved keenview. He reeled halfway across the ly to the possibility that he could put mouth of the draw and stopped. His a name to this human derelict they eyes, questing dully, fell upon the had picked up. He began to see it camp. He stared, as if doubtful as more than a possibility, as even a whether they had played him false, probability, at least as a fifty-fifty chance. A sardonic grin hovered about "Lost and all in," Holway said in a the corners of his grim mouth. It would be a strange freak of irony if Wally Selfridge, to prevent a meeting them made a move toward the between him and the government land agent, had sent him a hundred miles into the wilderness to save the life of Gordon Elliot and so had brought about the meeting that otherwise would never have taken place.

CHAPTER IX.

The Rah-Rah Boy Functions. Big Bill grumbled a good deal at the addition to the party. It would be decidedly awkward if this stranger should become rational and understand the status of the camp he had might be negligible, but supported by be a very different matter. Still, there was no halp for it They The famished man ate what was to take care of the man until he was

able to travel. At the worst, Big Bill "Coming up soon, pardner," Holt could give him a letter to Selfridge explaining things and so pass the buck to that gentleman. Gid Holt had, with the tacit consent of his guards, appointed himself as a

sort of nurse to the stranger. Early in the evening the sick man fell into a sound sleep, from which he did not awake until morning. George was away looking after the packhorses, Dud was cooking breakfast, and Blg Bill, his rifle close at hand, was chopplng young firs fifty feet back of the camp. The cook also had a gun, loaded with buckshot, lying on a box beside him, so that they were taking no chances with their prisoner.

The old miner turned from rearrangng the boughs of green fir on the smudge to see that his patient was awake and his mind normal. The quiet, steady eyes resting upon him told him that the delirium had passed. "Pretty nearly all in, wasn't I?" the

young man said.

The answer of Gid Holt was an odd "Yep. Seven-eleven-fifteen. Take 'er easy, old man," he said in his shrill, high voice as he moved toward the man in the blankets. Then, in a low tone, while he pretended to arrange the bedding over the stranger, he asked a quick question.

"Are you Elliot?" "Yea!

"Don't tell them. Talk football ingo as if you was still out of your naid." Holt turned and called to Dud. 'Says he wants some breakfast," "On the way," the cook answered.

Holt seemed to be soothing the debeen turned inside out to fool you. so as to keep me from telling you the truth. Pst! Tune up now."

actly suspicious, but he did not be-Played the last game, haven't we? meet up and have that nice con Come through with a square meal, you tial talk after all. The ways of four-flusher," demanded Elliot in a idence is strange, as you might say, querulous voice. He turned to Macy. Mr. Macy." 'Look here, Cap. Haven't I played the game all fall? Don't I get what I lenly. "Now what are you gold want now we're through?"

The voice of the young man was excited. His eyes had lost their quiet The old miner said no more. But his steadiness and roved restlessly to and one glance dissipated them.

"Sure you do. Hustle over and help

Sometimes the young government official lay staring straight in front of him. Sometimes he appeared to doze. Again he would talk in the disjointed way of one not clear in the head. An opportunity came in the after-

noon for a moment. "Keep your eyes skinned for chance to lay out the guard tonight and get his gun," Holt said quickly.

Gordon nodded. "I don't know that I've got to do everything just as you say," he complained aloud for the benefit of George, who was passing on his way to the place where the horses were hobbled.

"Now-now! There ain't nobody trying to boss you," Holt explained in a patient voice.

"They'd better not," snapped the in valid. "Some scrapper-that kid," said the

horse wrangler with a grin. Macy took the first watch that night. He turned in at two after he had roused Dud to take his place. The cook had been on duty about an hour when Elliot kicked Holt, who was sleeping beside him, to make sure that he was ready. The old man answered the kick with another.

Presently Gordon got up, yawned and strolled toward the edge of the

"Don't go and get tost, young fel-

low," cautioned Dud. Gordon, on his way back, passed be-



His Strong Fingers Closed on the Gullet of the Man.

fashion before a smudge with a muley shotgun across his knees.

"This ain't no country for chechi coes to be wandering around without keeper," the cook continued, "Looks like your folks would have better sense than to let their rah-rah boy-He got no farther. Elliot dropped to

one knee and his strong fingers closed not even a groan could escape him. The old miner, waiting with every muscle ready and every nerve under tension, flung aside his blanket and hurled himself at the guard. It took him less time than it takes to tell to wrest the gun from the cook.

He got to his feet just as Big Bill. his eyes and brain still fogged with sleep, sat up and began to take totice of the disturbance.

"Don't move," warned Holt sharply. "Better throw your hands up. monkey business, do you hear? I'd as lief blow a hole through you as not." Big Bill turned bitterly to Elliot. "So you were faking all the time, young fellow. We save your life and

proposition as a double-crosser. "And that ain't all," chirped up Holt blithely. "Let me introduce our friend to you, Mr. Big Bill Macy. This is frious man. What he really said was Gordon Elliot, the land agent apthis. "Selfridge has arranged a plant pointed to look over the Kamatlah for you at Kamatlah. The camp has claims. Selfridge gave you lads this penitentiary job so as I wouldn't meet They've brought me here a prisoner Elliot when he reached the camp. If just one weakness. There was times he hadn't been so darned antious about it, our young friend would have let it alone for months and then just Big Bill had put down his ax and died here on the divide. But Mr. Selfwas approaching. He was not ex- ridge kindly outfitted a party and sent

us a hundred miles into the hill s to lieve in taking unnecessary chances.
"I tell you I'm out of training. consequence is, Elliot and me "Your trick," conceded Big Bill sul-

z to do with us?"

"Not a thing-going to leave right here to prospect Wild creek," answered Holt blandly. den says there's gold up hereof it."

Bill Macy condemned Durden guage profane and energetic He didn't stop at Durden. Holt c e in fects. Elliot and Holt found no more for a share of it, also Elliot and Self-

don't buy you anything," said Holway curtly. "What's the use of beefing?"

"Now you're shouting, my friend," agreed old Gideon. "I guess, Elliot, you can loosen up on the chef's throat awhile. He's had persuading enough don't you reckon? I'll sit here a sorter keep the boys company while you cut the pack-ropes and bring 'em here. But first I'd step in and unload all the hardware they're packing. If you don't one of them is likely to get anxious. I'd hate to see any of them commit suicide with none of their friends here to say, 'Don't he look nat-

ural?" Elliot brought back the pack-ropes and cut them into suitable lengths. Holt's monologue rambled on. He was garrulous and affable. Not for a long time had he enjoyed himself so much.

Gordon tied the hands of Big Bill behind him, then roped his feet together, after which he did the same for Holway. The old miner superintended the job and was not satisfied till he had added a few extra knots on his own behalf.

"That'll hold them for awhile, I shouldn't wonder. Now if you'll just cover friend chef with this sawed-off gat, Elliot, I'll throw the diamond hitch over what supplies we'll need to get back to Kamatlah. I'll take one bronch and leave the other to the convicts," said Holt cheerfully.

"Forget that convict stuff," growled Macy. "With Macdonald back of us and the Guttenchilds back of him, you'll have a hectic time getting anything on us."

"That might be true if these folks were back of you. But are they? Course I ain't any Sherlock Holmes, but it don't look to me like they'd play any such fool system as this."

After Holt had packed one of the animals he turned to Elliot.

"I reckon we're ready." Under orders from Elliot Dud fixed up the smudges and arranged the mosquito netting over the bound men so as to give them all the protection pos-

"We're going to take Dud with us for a part of the trip. We'll send him back to you later in the day. You'll have to fast till he gets back, but outside of that you'll do very well if you lon't roll around trying to get loose. Do that, and you'll jar loose the mosquito netting. You know what that

means," explained Gordon. "It ain't likely any grizzlies will come pokin' their noses into camp. But you never can tell. Any last words asked Gideon Holt.

The last words they heard from Big Bill as they moved down the draw were sulphuric.

It was three o'clock in the morning by the watch when they started. About nine they threw off for breakfast. By this time they were just across the divide and were ready to take the down trail.

"I think we'll let Dud go now," Elliot told his partner in the adventure. "Better hold him till afternoon. Then they can't possibly reach us till we

get to Kamatlah." "What does it matter if they do? We have both rifles and have left them only one revolver. Besides, I don't like to leave two bound men alone in on the gullet of the man so tightly that so wild a district for any great time. No, we'll start Dud on the back trail. That grizzly you promised Big Bill might really turn up."

The two men struck the headwaters of Wild Goose creek about noon and followed the stream down. They trayeled steadily without haste. So long as they kept a good lookout there was nothing to be feared from the men they had left behind. They had both a long start and the advantage of weapons.

If Elliot had advertised for a year he could not have found a man who knew more of Colby Macdonald's past than Gideon Holt. The old man had worked a claim on Frenchman creek with him and had by sharp practiceyou round on us. You're a pretty slick so at least he had come to believebeen lawed out of his rights by the shrewd Scotsman. For seventeen years he had nursed a grudge against Macdonald, and he was never tired of talking about him. One story in particu-

lar Interested Gordon. "There was Farrell O'Neill. He was a good fellow, Farrell was, but he had when he liked the bottle too well. He'd lap the stuff up. It was the time of the stampede to Bonanza creek. Well. the news of the strike on Bonanza reached Dawson and we all burnt up the trail to get to the new ground first. O'Neill was one of the first. He got in about twenty below Discovery. if I remember. Mac wasn't in Dawson, but he got there next mo'nin' and heard the news. He lit out for Bonanza pronto."

The old miner stopped, took a chew of tobacco, and looked down into the valley far below where Kamatlah could just be seen, a little huddle of huts.

"Well?" asked Elliot. It was occasionally necessary to prompt Holt when he paused for his dramatic ef-

"Mac drops in and joins O'Nelll at night. They knew each other, y' un-

Mac would put up at his camp. O'Neill -that he was away. Seems to me I had a partner and they had located heard he went prospecting." together. Fellow named Strong." "He did. Up Wild Goose creek,

"Not Hanford Strong, a little, heavyset man somewhere around fifty?" "You've tagged the right man. Know him?"

"I've met him." against Han Strong. Anyway, he was touch with him? off that night packing grub up while Farrell held down the claim. Mac had a jug of booze with him. He got Farrell tanked up. You know Mac-how he can put it across when he's a mind to. He's a forceful devil, and he can be a mighty likable one. But when he is friendliest you want to watch o

Farrell-and done it a-plenty."

"How?" "O'Neill got mellowed up till he thought Mac was his best friend. He was ready to eat out of his hand. So Mac works him up to sign a contractbefore witnessen too; trust Mac for that-exchanging his half interest in the claim for five hundred dollars in cash and Mac's no-'count lease on Frenchman creek. Inside of a week Mac and Strong struck a big pay streak. They took over two hundred thousand from the spring clean-up." "It was nothing better than rob-

"Call it what you want to. Anyhow it stuck. O'Neill kicked, and that's all the failure. The chief wanted results. the good it did him. He consulted law- He did not ask of his subordinates how yers at Dawson. Finally he got so discouraged that he plumb went to pieces-got on a long bat and stayed there till his money ran out. Then one bitter night he starts up to Bonanza to have it out with Mac. The mercury was so low it had run into the ground a foot. Farrell slept in a deserted cabin without a fire and week he died. That's all Mac done legal, either."

Gordon thought of Sheba O'Neill as she sat listening to the tales of Macdonald in Diane's parlor and his gorge rose at the man.

"But Mac had fell on his feet all right," continued Holt. "He got his start off that claim. Now he's a mil-

reckon." They reached the outskirts of Kamatlab about noon of the third day. they had eaten and went in alone to while they would remain on the comlook the ground over. He met Selfridge at the post office. That gentle-

man was effusive in his greeting. "This is a pleasant surprise, Mr. Elllot. When did you get in? I'm down on business, of course. No need to tell you that-nobody would come to this hole for any other reason. Howland and his wife are the only possible people here. Of course you'll stop with us."

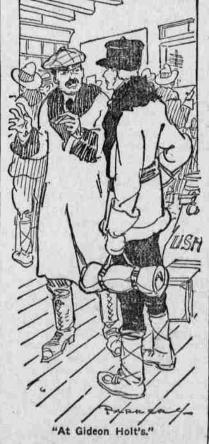
Elliot answered genially. "Pleasant time we had on the river, didn't we? Thanks awfully for your invitation, but I've already made arrangements for putting up." "Where? There's no decent place

in camp except at Howland's." "I couldn't think of troubling him,"

countered Gordon. "No trouble at all. We'll send for

The land agent let him have it beween the eyes. "At Gideon Holt's.

your things. Where are they?"



I'm staying with him on his claim." Wally had struck a match to light a cigarette, but this simple statement petrified him. His jaw dropped and his eyes bulged. Not till the flame burned his fingers did he come to life. "Did you say you were staying-

...th Gid Holt?" he floundered. "Yes. He offered to board me," answered the young man blandly. "But-I didn't know h. was here-

"Cut it out, Bill. That line o' talk | derstand, so o' course it was natural | seems to me I had heard-somewhere

with Big Bill Macy and two other men. But I asked him to come back with me-and he did."

Feebly Wally groped for the clue without finding it. Had Big Bill sold "Well, I never heard anything him out? And how had Elliot got into "Just so, Mr. Elliot. But really, you know, Howland can make you a great

deal more comfortable than Holt. His wife is a famous cook. I'll have a man go get your traps." "It's very good of you, but I think

won't move." "Oh, but you must. Holt's nuttyhe don't slip an uppercut at you that'll nobody at home, you know. Every-

put you out of biz. He done that to body knows that." "Is he? The old man struck me as being remarkably clear-headed. By the way, I want to thank you for sending a relief party out to find me, Mr.

Selfridge. Except for your help I would have died in the hills," This was another facer for Wally. What the devil did the fellow mean? The deuce of it was that he knew all the facts and Wally did not. One thing stood out to Selfridge like a sore thumb. His plans had come tumbling down like a house of cards. Either Big Bill had blundered amazingly, or he had played traitor. In either case Wally could guess pretty shrewdly whose hide Macdonald would tan for they got them. And this was the sec-

had come to grief. CHAPTER X.

ond time in succession that Selfridge

Gordon Invites Himself to Dinnerand Does Not Enjoy It.

Big Bill and his companions reached not enough bedding. He caught pneu- Kametlah early next day. They remony. By the time he reached the ported at once to Selfridge. It had claim he was a mighty sick man. Next been the intention of Wally to vent upon them the bad temper that had to O'Neill. Not a thing that wasn't been gathering ever since his talk with Elliot. But his first sarcastic question drew such a snarl of anger that he reconsidered. The men were both sullen and furious.

The little man became alarmed. Instead of reproaches he gave them soft words and promises. The company would see them through. It would prolionaire two or three times over, I tect them against criminal procedure, But above all they must stand pat in denial. A conviction would be impossible even if the state's attorney filed Gordon left Holt at his cabin after an indictment against them. Mean-

pany pay roll. Gordon Elliot was a trained investigator. Even without Holt at his side he would probably have unearthed the truth about the Kamatlah situation. But with the little miner by his side to tell him the facts, he found his task

an easy one.

Selfridge followed orders and let him talk with the men freely. All of them had been drilled till they knew their story like parrots. They were suspicious of the approaches of Elliot, but they had been warned that they must appear to talk candidly. The result was that some talked too much and some not enough. They let slip admissions under skillful examination that could be explained on no other basis than that of company

ownership. Both Selfridge and Howland outdid themselves in efforts to establish close social relations. But Gordon was careful to put himself under no obligations. Within two weeks Elliot had finished his work at Kamatlah.

"Off for Kusiak tomorrow," he told Holt that night.

The old miner went with him as a guide to the big bend. Gordon had no desire to attempt again Fifty Mile swamp without the help of someone who knew every foot of the trail. With Holt to show the way the swamp became merely a hard, grueling mush through boggy lowlands. Weary with the trail, they reached

the river at the end of a long day. An Indian village lay sprawled along the bank, and through this the two men tramped to the roadhouse where they were to put up for the night.

Holt called to the younger man, who was at the time in the lead.

"Wait a minute, Elliot." Gordon turned. The old Alaskan was offering a quarter to a little halfnaked Indian boy. Shyly the fouryear-old came forward, a step at a time, his finger in his mouth.

"What's your name, kid?" . Holt flashed a look at Elllot that warned him to pay attention.

"Colmac," the boy answered bash-His fist closed on the quarter, he turned, and like a startled caribou he

fled to a comely young Indian woman standing near the trail. With gleaming eyes Holt turned to Elllot. "Take a good look at the squaw," he said in a low voice.

Macdonald and Elliot drep pretense of friendship and start bitter struggle for Sheba's hand. The next installment tells how Macdonald gained the first advantage.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)